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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2020

CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

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TERRORISM

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND INVESTIGATIONS

The Honorable Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield:

I write to ask that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention revise its protocols for notifying states with regard to travelers returning to the United States from countries with reported cases of coronavirus (COVID-19). Currently, states are only notified and provided with lists of travelers returning from China, where COVID-19 originated. COVID-19 has now spread to 58 countries and it will likely continue to appear in more countries in the weeks and months ahead. Given the seriousness and rapid pace of this outbreak, I strongly urge the CDC to provide notifications to state agencies when travelers arrive in the U.S. from other countries with significant or elevated reports of incidents of COVID-19.

On Sunday, the Rhode Island Department of Health announced that two “presumptive positive” cases of COVID-19 had been detected in the state, and that a third individual was being tested. It was reported that all three of these individuals had returned to Rhode Island from school field trip to Italy. As a result, two school campuses were forced to shut down for extensive cleaning to protect against the virus spreading. Dozens of Rhode Islanders are now being monitored.

Transparency during this time is critical to ensuring that Americans have access to accurate and timely information needed to prevent contamination and to seek treatment when appropriate. We have seen that inaccurate reporting can lead to confusion and panic surrounding this epidemic. It is critical that Americans be reassured that federal and state governments are closely monitoring the spread of this virus. The CDC recently announced that it would stop publishing the number of coronavirus test cases on their website, which could lead to discrepancies in reporting and greater confusion.

As COVID-19 continues to spread, it is imperative that federal and state agencies coordinate their activities to reduce the threat and impact of this dangerous virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should take immediate steps to ensure states are more thoroughly notified and informed of possible risks to the population.

Thank you for your time and attention on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Cicilline". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

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David N. Cicilline  
*Member of Congress*